

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION CARD SET

I CANNOT TALK RIGHT NOW

I am currently unable to speak verbally.

I may be:

- overwhelmed
- overloaded
- shutting down
- processing slowly
- experiencing speech loss

I can still:

- ☐ listen
- ☐ understand some information
- ☐ communicate another way
- ☐ respond later
- ☐ participate with support

Please give me time and avoid pressuring me to speak immediately.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

PLEASE GIVE ME A MINUTE

My brain is processing.

I need:

- ☐ extra processing time
- ☐ slower instructions
- ☐ one question at a time
- ☐ reduced talking around me
- ☐ written instructions
- ☐ quiet

I am not ignoring you.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

YES / NO / MAYBE CARD

QUICK RESPONSE CARD

YES ☐

NO ☐

MAYBE ☐

I DON'T KNOW ☐

I NEED MORE TIME ☐

PLEASE WRITE IT DOWN ☐

PLEASE REPEAT THAT ☐

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

☐ speaking

☐ typing

☐ AAC

☐ writing

☐ gestures

☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

OVERLOAD WARNING CARD

I am becoming overloaded.

Possible signs:

- delayed responses
- difficulty speaking
- irritability
- staring
- crying
- shutting down
- covering ears
- pacing
- inability to answer questions

I may need:

- ☐ a break
- ☐ reduced noise
- ☐ lower lights
- ☐ fewer people talking
- ☐ water
- ☐ sensory tools
- ☐ space

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH ME

I am overwhelmed and do not want physical contact right now.

Please avoid:

- grabbing
- guiding me physically
- tapping me
- hugging me
- crowding my space

Physical contact may increase distress during overload or shutdown.

Thank you for respecting my boundaries.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

I NEED HELP BUT CANNOT EXPLAIN

Something is wrong.

I need support, but I cannot fully explain what is happening right now.

Please help me:

- ☐ move somewhere quieter
- ☐ contact support staff
- ☐ contact home
- ☐ access my accommodations
- ☐ regulate first
- ☐ write instead of speak

I may be able to explain later once regulated.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

WRITING IS EASIER RIGHT NOW

Verbal speech is difficult right now.

Please allow me to:

- ☐ type
- ☐ write
- ☐ point
- ☐ use AAC
- ☐ use gestures
- ☐ answer later

Communication still counts even if it is not verbal.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

SHUTDOWN IN PROGRESS

This one is especially important because people confuse shutdowns with “attitude.”

I am experiencing a shutdown.

During shutdowns I may:

- stop talking
- struggle to move
- avoid eye contact
- become very quiet
- respond slowly
- seem emotionally flat
- struggle to process language

This is neurological overwhelm, not intentional disrespect.

Please reduce demands and allow regulation support.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

PLEASE TALK LESS

Too much language is hard for me right now.

Please:

- ☐ use fewer words
- ☐ speak more slowly
- ☐ give one direction at a time
- ☐ write it down
- ☐ pause between questions

Too much verbal input can make processing harder.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

SAFE PERSON CARD

I need one of my safe support people.

Preferred Staff:

I regulate better with familiar support people.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

I NEED TO LEAVE THE ROOM

I need to leave briefly to regulate safely.

I am attempting to prevent escalation or overload.

I plan to:

- ☐ go to my approved location
- ☐ return when regulated
- ☐ continue participating afterward

Please allow me to use my accommodations appropriately.

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ typing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ writing
- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:

EMERGENCY RED CARD

This should be visually distinct.

I am in severe distress.

I may be:

- panicking
- overloaded
- unable to communicate safely
- close to meltdown/shutdown

Please:

- ☐ reduce stimulation
 - ☐ stop asking questions
 - ☐ contact support staff
 - ☐ allow me space
 - ☐ allow AAC/comfort tools
 - ☐ help me reach my safe location
-

Student Name: _____

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
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- ☐ gestures
- ☐ mixed communication

Support Contact:

Case Manager:
